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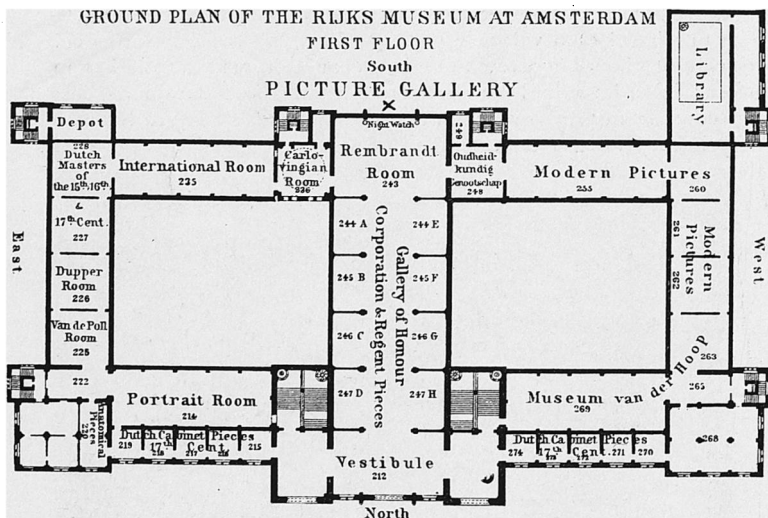
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REMBRANDT'S MASTERPIECE DETHRONED

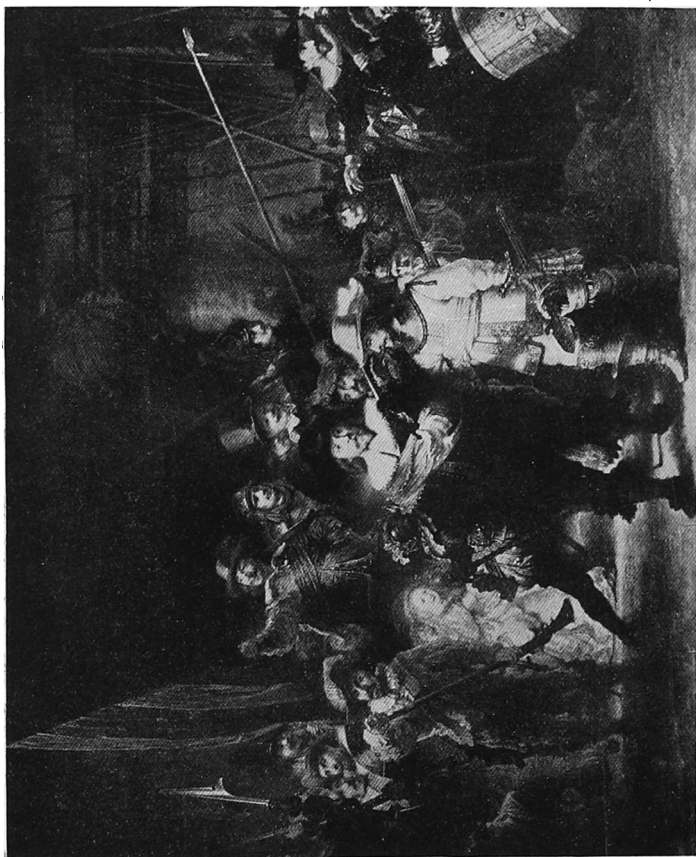
"The Night Watch," Rembrandt's masterpiece, which has so long held the place of honor in the Rijks Museum, is to be dethroned by order of the committee which at present controls the destinies of the pictures in this great gallery. The word "dethroned" is used



advisedly, for among the pictures of this great master, "The Night Watch" is easily monarch of them all—the noblest of the noble.

It now hangs in the Rembrandt room, which is at the end of the "gallery of honor," draped behind with a subtle, greenish toned velvet, which brings out to the best possible advantage all its wondrous color. It is visible from the vestibule through the entire length of the galleries devoted to the corporation and regent pieces, and at this distance, fully one hundred feet, the effect is marvelous. It is lighted with consummate skill, and the figures seem to be fairly stepping out of the frame—which, by the way, rests immediately upon the floor—and advancing toward the spectator. The light of the room is so soft and mellow against this back wall that it seems to melt into the Rembrandt "atmosphere."

If Rembrandt could live again for a brief minute he would doubtless spend it in reaching out both hands, one for the architect and the



THE NIGHT WATCH
By Rembrandt



other for the director of this gallery; for in his life he probably never knew how great a picture he had painted. Hung as it is, it would be a revelation to him. The Rijks Museum, it might be said, was planned to house this great picture properly. Mr. P. J. H. Cuypers, one of the most accomplished architects in Europe, had this in mind when he planned this long central gallery. Everything else was, in a sense, to lead up to this the greatest work of the greatest Dutchman. It was to be approached slowly and with reverence. There was to be no bursting in upon it with a "Hello! here's 'The Night Watch.' " The visitor was to be arrested upon the threshold while he was yet afar off, and made to feel that here at least was something to command his respect.

But now all this thought and study and conscientious effort must go for naught. The committee which represents the municipality of commercial Amsterdam has decided that they have been hiding their most brilliant light under a bushel, so they will drag it out of the shelter of its modest setting into the garish light of the noonday sun, where it may receive the acclaim of the unthinking populace.

"The Night Watch" was painted in 1642, and is the largest picture Rembrandt ever painted, being eleven by fourteen feet in size, just filling the sight lines through the wide doorway of the Rembrandt room. It represents Captain Frans Banning Cocq's company of arquebusiers emerging from their guild-house on the Singel. In front is the captain in a dark brown, almost black costume, at his side Lieutenant Willem van Ruitenbergh in a yellow buffalo jerkin, both figures in the full light, so that the shadow of the captain's hand is distinctly traceable on the jerkin. On the right hand of the captain are an arquebusier putting on his weapon, and two children, of whom the one in front, a girl, has a dead cock hanging from her girdle (perhaps one of the prizes). A step behind them is the flag-bearer, Jan Visser Cornelissen. The other side of the picture is pervaded with similar life and spirit.

The remarkable chiaroscuro of the whole picture has led to the belief that Rembrandt intended to depict a nocturnal scene, but the event represented really takes place in daylight, the lofty vaulted hall of the guild being lighted only by windows above, to the left, not visible to the spectator. The hall, therefore, is properly obscured in partial twilight. The peculiar light and spirited action of the picture elevate this group of portraits into a most effective dramatic scene, which ever since its creation has been enthusiastically admired by all connoisseurs of art. Each guild member represented paid one hundred florins for his portrait, so that, as there were originally sixteen in the group the painter received sixteen hundred florins for his work. To-day the picture, if for sale, would bring one million florins.

WILLIAM VERNON.

AMSTERDAM, August 30, 1902.